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Mayor Emanuel Calls on Congress to Invest Savings from Bipartisan Sentencing Reform Legislation in Underserved Communities

Mayor Calls on Congress to Seize the Opportunity to Break the Cycles of Violence in Hardest Hit Communities

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today called on Congress to pass bipartisan criminal justice reform legislation and seize the opportunity to invest billions of dollars in projected savings from this type of legislation into struggling urban communities. The Mayor announced the effort at an event this morning recognizing Congresswoman Robin Kelly's new "UP Initiative", attended by Congressman Bobby Rush and Congresswoman Cheri Bustos as well.

Similar to legislative efforts the Mayor has pushed at the city and state levels in recent years, federal bipartisan criminal justice reform legislation can take meaningful steps to reduce or eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenders. Based on estimates federal sentencing reform legislation could save the government nearly \$24 billion over 20 years, and Mayor Emanuel is calling for at least 30% of the estimated savings to be reinvested in urban communities that need it the most, including those in Chicago.

"As a nation we stand at a crossroads where the very next move we make determines the future of our children and the futures of their children," said Mayor Emanuel. "That's why I'm calling on Congress to pass a bipartisan sentencing reform bill, and invest in the communities where resources are needed the most. Let's take action to redefine our collective future."

Evidence shows that investing in neighborhoods most impacted by mass incarceration works to prevent violence, create economic opportunities, and widen the path to the middle-class. From neighborhood economic development and job creation to youth mentoring, afterschool and summer jobs programs, support services for those returning from incarceration are effective at advancing neighborhood safety and overall quality of life.

"It's no secret that violence in cities across America is linked to education access and lack of jobs and community investment. That's why the UP Initiative is a call to action to address these issues head on and bring opportunity to youth in Chicago and across the country," said Congresswoman Kelly. "Mayor Emanuel has laid out a funding mechanism that could help this

initiative, and so more many others around the United States. His approach to this topic is the exact type of thinking we need.”

“The best minds came together today to address this singular most important issue of urban violence facing our city and our nation. We must unite and generate a solid will toward fixing the issue of urban violence,” said Congressman Rush. “We cannot never hire enough police officers or build enough prisons to address the pandemic of gun violence. For this reason, I welcome Mayor Emanuel’s funding approach to invest in our underserved communities, and will continue to advocate for badly-needed criminal justice reform measures in Congress.”

"Gun violence hurts far too many families across Illinois and, whether it's in Chicago, Rockford or Peoria, we must do more," said Congresswoman Bustos. "To overcome this challenge and help our next generation reach their full potential, we need to invest in our schools, expand job training programs and make higher education more accessible and affordable."

This call to action by the Mayor is the latest part of his overall record on improving our nation’s sentencing laws. At the city level, the Mayor has led the charge in passing a local ordinance that decriminalized possession of cannabis. At the state level, the Mayor advocated for and helped pass automatic juvenile expungement legislation in Springfield, as well as the decriminalization of minor possession of one gram of a controlled substance.

Chicago, under Mayor Emanuel’s leadership, is expanding prevention programming and re-entry support for residents. The Chicago Transit Authority’s Second Chance program, which provides paid job training and apprenticeships, has quadrupled in the past five years. Chicago now has one of the largest youth summer jobs programs in the country, One Summer Chicago, which will serve over 25,000 youth in 2016. And the city has invested in youth mentoring and tutoring programs like Becoming a Man (B.A.M.), which are now national models for reducing violence and improving academic outcomes.